

C. REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-4, 7-10, 13-17, and 20-23 are currently present in the Application, and claims 1, 8, and 14 are independent claims. Claims 1, 8, and 14 have been amended, and claims 6, 12, and 19 have been canceled in this Response.

Information Disclosure Statement

On April 5, 2005, Applicant filed an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) listing three references. This IDS has not yet been considered by the Examiner. Applicant has attached a copy of the IDS filed April 5, 2005, to this Response, including the Auto-Reply Facsimile from the United States Patent and Trademark Office, indicating that the IDS was received by the Office. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner consider the IDS filed April 5, 2005, and return an initialed copy of said IDS to Applicant in the next office communication.

Drawings

Applicant notes that the Examiner did not indicate whether the formal drawings, filed with Applicant's application, are accepted by the Examiner. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner indicate whether the formal drawings are accepted in the next office communication.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 6, 12, and 19 are objected to as being dependent upon rejected base claims. However, the Examiner has stated that claims 6, 12, and 19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicant has amended

independent claim 1 to include limitations previously present in dependent claim 6, and has canceled claim 6. Similarly, Applicant has amended independent claims 8 and 14 to include limitations previously present in dependent claims 12 and 19, respectively, and has canceled claims 12 and 19. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 8, and 14, and the claims which depend from them, are allowable.

Claim Rejections - Alleged Anticipation Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-4, 7-10, 13-17, and 20-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Blegen et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,757,716, hereinafter "Blegen"). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections. Based on the amendments to independent claims 1, 8, and 14, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) are now moot, and respectfully requests that these rejections be withdrawn.

Conclusion

As a result of the foregoing, it is asserted by Applicant that the remaining claims in the Application are in condition for allowance, and Applicant respectfully requests an early allowance of such claims.

Applicant respectfully request that the Examiner contact the Applicant's attorney listed below if the Examiner believes

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that such a discussion would be helpful in resolving any remaining questions or issues related to this Application.

Respectfully submitted,

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